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ABSTRACT

Growing out of experience in the Pacific Institute for Nonsexist Education (PINE), this paper describes how an evaluation approach derived from oral history and arthropology was used to document the lessons learned about the design and operation of a sex equity technical assistance program. A brief overview describes the PINE program which operated in 1977-78 to give training and assistance to small rural school districts in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho in the implementation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the federal statute prohibiting sex discrimination in educational programs. Half of the paper is written by C. David Beers, who served as PINE's evaluator. He describes the research perspectives and methods by which persons directly responsible for designing, operating, and evaluating the technical assistance program observed and recorded their own learning processes as the project unfolded in the self-reflective manner suggested by Nelson's concept of "full or active participant observation." In the other half of the paper, the project director, Kathryn Scotten, discusses ten of the lessons learned in this manner. Four of the ten follow: (1) the sex desegregation center should model the behaviors it desires school districts to adopt and practice, (2) implementation of sex equity in schools is best achieved through a conceptual approach which places it in an educational context rather than a legal/compliance one, (3) adaptivity--not to goals but to methods to achieve them--is crucial to the success of the change agent, and (4) the measure of success is the ability of local educators to continue the change process when assistance is withdrawn. (JT)

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APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY IN A SEX EQUITY TRAINING PROGRAM

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Paper

In recent years issues related to sex equity in education have become prominent concerns, especially since the enactment of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the federal statute prohibiting sex discrimination in educational programs. One purpose of this paper is to document some lessons learned about implementing a sex equity training institute that provides technical assistance to rural school districts in the Pacific Northwest. Another purpose is to describe how a perspective derived from oral history and anthropology has been used to build a data source consisting of the insights and judgments of persons with direct responsibilities for designing, operating and evaluating technical assistance programs. The major principles of implementing sex equity training programs as articulated by practioners can provide educators and funding agencies with practical information about how legislative mandates are translated into operational programs.

The original design of this Title IX technical assistance effort was built out of an anthropological orientation like that so concisely titled by Sarason, "The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change".[1] One aim of this approach is to provide timely information that could be used for on-line management decisions. To accomplish this, the persons directly responsible for delivering technical assistance have been observing and recording their own learning processes as the project unfolds, in the self-reflective manner suggested by Nelson's concept of "full or active participant observation".[2]

Applying the concept of active participant observation to this project, we have seen that the task of producing documentation of the lessons learned by practitioners requires that we record our own learning processes so that others in turn can learn from us. This means that we reflect upon what we do as we try out different strategies in the course of accomplishing the training goals and objectives. The guiding question we ask ourselves is this: What have we learned about implementing this sex equity training institute that would be helpful for others? Each of us is an active participant in the process of carrying out this training program, and each of us can try to document our own learnings as we have become more experienced over the course of the project.

Funding agencies are interested in disseminating information about model projects, and oral history provides a way to document the lessons learned by those who have confronted directly in their work and lives the frustrations and accomplishments of trying to change schools toward more equitable educational opportunities for males and females.

Description of the Pacific Institute for Nonsexist Education

The Pacific Institute for Nonsexist Education (PINE) was in 1977-1978 a training program developed especially for small/rural school districts in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Members of the Institute staff provided training and other assistance in the implementation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. PINE was, in one sense, an outgrowth of the Northwest General Assistance Center (NWGAC) at Portland State University. Since September, 1975, the NWGAC has provided school districts in Washington, Oregon and Idaho with technical assistance related to both race and sex desegregation/integration. In the course of this work, we came into contact with administrators and teachers from many small districts. For these people, federal compliance was complicated by relatively limited financial and staff resources and by the fact that most technical assistance materials and activities concerning Title IX have focused on urban areas. Thus, when funding became available from the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, we proposed and were funded for a training institute comprised of approximately 30 small/rural districts in the Northwest for the 1977-1978 school year. These districts attended training sessions where they received intensive assistance with Title IX implementation from Institute staff and consultants.

This paper is organized into three major sections: 1) an introduction conceptualized and written by the two authors; 2) a discussion of the research perspectives and methods written by C. David Beers, who served as PINE's evaluator; and 3) a discussion of the lessons learned about Title IX technical assistance written by Kathryn Scotten, who served as PINE's director.

SECTION II: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES AND METHODS[1]

Oral History and Anthropology

The approach taken to evaluation in this sex equity training institute draws primarily from the research traditions of oral history and anthropology in which the perceptions of project participants are documented and analyzed to produce an account of the lessons learned about the design and operation of Title IX technical assistance. One premise of this research approach is that persons with direct experience with program operations have learned much by virtue of their participation that would be valuable to share with others. Another premise is that evaluation activities can support implementation activities, for accurate descriptions of participants' views and perceptions are necessary for effective program administration. Information that is needed for making decisions about on-going project affairs is basically similar to information that is needed for making evaluative statements about what is happening in the project and how much congruence there is between what was originally planned and what actually happens.

The approach taken here to the description of implementation processes and the lessons learned by participants acknowledges the emergent nature of this area of educational evaluation and research. A bridge toward alternative traditions for disciplined inquiry about educational matters is being built through the process of adapting perspectives and methods from anthropology and oral history which have long conceptual and methodological traditions of their own that only recently have begun to be applied to federally funded educational evaluations.[2]

This discussion of the perspectives and methods influencing this study is necessary because this kind of people-oriented field based research does not have a rigorously specified set of technical procedures that can be simply referenced by one or a few document titles. Since this study is part of a newly emerging emphasis in the educational research enterprise, the methodological approach needs some explication.

The evaluation of this sex equity training institute draws from two concurrent and related perspectives, one drawn from the tradition of oral history and the other drawn from anthropology. The perspective from oral history emphasizes the documentation of the participant's perceptions of implementation processes. Persons with direct hands-on responsibilities and experiences with the sex equity training institute have been encouraged to speak for themselves in describing what happens, why it happens and the lessons learned. Data generated in formal and informal interviews and seminars with program participants can be recorded, analyzed and reported so that participants' views of implementation processes are made part of the evaluation record.

One assumption from this oral history perspective is that people with direct experiences in a program's operation are in a position to perceive and understand aspects of that program which may not be captured in standard evaluation methodologies. Another assumption is that people

learn much about the world by talking with others - through questions, discussions and dialogue. The oral history perspective opens up possibilities of trying to utilize conversation and dialogue in rather direct ways to create evaluation data.

The perspective from the anthropological tradition emphasizes the description and analysis of the researcher's perceptions of implementation processes. The researcher in this view is a special kind of program participant - one who is trained in making relevant observations and recording data accurately in complex naturalistic field settings, and then drawing on theoretical constructs about social and cultural behavior to help analyze the data into coherent accounts that illuminate the phenomena under consideration. The anthropological observer uses a form of the scientific method in making observations, recording data, analyzing data, and building explanations about how innovative pieces of social legislation like Title IX are translated into action through such projects as training institutes.

Since an important source of data for the researcher is program participants' perceptions of implementation processes, there is, of course, overlap between the oral history and anthropological approaches to the study of program implementation. In this project there has been a great deal of spontaneous, informal conversation and dialogue between the project director (a participant) and the evaluator (a researcher), so that in practice the distinct perceptions of the two have tended to merge over time into a synthesis account of program implementation processes that has been informed by analysis and insights from both the practioner and researcher perspectives.

Active Participant Observation

Documentation of what is learned by participants in Title IX technical assistance training institutes is an important step in making it possible for others to draw on this practical knowledge. This research approach is designed to support these demonstration and dissemination responsibilities of federally funded projects. One way of doing this is to try to develop ways of communicating the lessons learned in Title IX technical assistance projects as much as possible in the words of participants themselves, since it is felt that using the natural language and conceptual schemes of these with first-hand experience with Title IX technical assistance would be an effective way of communicating some of the research findings to varied audiences that include persons without technical research backgrounds.

In this paper, the PINE director writes about the lessons she has learned in the course of implementing this Institute in 1977-1978, which she is in turn applying to the design and operation of the Northwest Sex Desegregation Assistance Center for which she is director for the 1978-1979 year. This exemplifies one of the major features of the Institute's evaluation approach, for we have tried to document the process of implementation as it is perceived by those with direct hands-on experience and responsibilities for carrying out the project. The effort has been to describe what has been learned about the implementation process from the

inside, from the point of view of people who have to deal with these implementation issues as part of their daily experiences.

To carry out this documentation function, the Institute director has become an "active participant observer" in the sense defined by the anthropologist Richard K. Nelson in his book, Hunters of the Northern Ice.

> "The present study uses a technique which I prefer to call 'active' or 'full' participation. This means that in order to document techniques of hunting and travel, the ethnographer attempts to learn and master them himself - to participate in them to the fullest possible extent.[3]

Following Nelson's concept of "active participant observation", we have learned as participants in the Institute requires that we record our own learning processes so that others in turn can learn from us. This means we reflect upon what we do as we try out different things in the course of implementing the Title IX training institute. The guiding question we ask ourselves is this: What have we learned about implementing this Institute that would be helpful for others? Each of us is an active participant in the process of carrying out the Institute's activities, and each of us can try to document what we learn about our jobs as we become more experienced over time. As program participants, we have tried to become more self-reflective about our own behavior in relationship to implementing a program of Title IX technical assistance.

Spirit of Inquiry

The research and management approach taken in this training institute also tries to maintain a balance between operating from what has already been learned through experience and being open to new learning. This approach is deeply rooted in a spirit of inquiry in which questions are raised based on what has already been learned with the anticipation that today's answers will not necessarily be tomorrow's answers. This spirit is especially important for carrying out work in relatively uncharted areas like Title IX technical assistance, for what is needed here is a known method and experiential background that provides context and confidence for taking steps into the unknown. Questions are raised and answers analyzed based on the best information available at any particular time. As new experiences unfold, additional information is collected and analyzed to help us find out what is happening, why it is happening, and what lessons have been learned. This means that the program operations are carried out in a self-reflective manner.

The research operations are likewise carried out in a self-reflective manner. Based on information that results from this type of self-reflective analysis, the research procedures themselves are revised and improved. Once revisions are made in the program operations and/or in the research procedures, there must be a willingness to go back to the first part of the cycle and try out the revised procedures all over again with the self-reflecting monitoring system still in place and with the almost certain knowledge that the final "right answer" probably cannot be

known altogether. This means that continual self-reflective monitoring and revision will be necessary - it is simply a condition of approaching program implementation and the documentation of the lessons learned about program implementation from this perspective.

In this view, the program implementation process is conceptualized as one that requires the continual renewal of the cycle of trying things out, monitoring what is tried out and recording what is learned so that revisions can be made based on information gained through self-reflection, and then going back to the first part of the cycle to try things out again. This means that although much can be specified ahead of time in project plans, a crucial ingredient of this approach is the willingness to acknowledge that everything cannot be specified in advance, with the confidence that this self-reflective field-based approach to program implementation will uncover information not knowable in advance, and that it will be effectively responsive to unanticipated problems, issues and insights.

If we focus on documenting our own learnings as persons responsible for program implementation, we are performing as active participant observers. Nelson's insight about how he does ethnography can be used as rubric for uniting key elements in the tradition of program management, which is charged with carrying out the work, and the tradition of evaluation research, which is charged with describing how the work is carried out.

This kind of self-reflective description and analysis undertaken by active participant observers was incorporated in structured as well as spontaneous ways into the day-to-day flow of our training institute's activities. The notion of the active participant observer provided a shared conceptual framework for looking at ourselves and our work as friends as well as collegues, and it helped us make explicit and operationalize our desire to integrate more fully the management and evaluation components of this Title IX training institute.

SECTION III. LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT TITLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The lessons learned over the course of the PINE project, and developed through a self-reflective approach to program evaluation, have been formalized to serve as a conceptual framework for the provision of Title IX/sex equity technical assistance for the current technical assistance program, the Northwest Sex Desegregation Assistance Center. These lessons, or understandings, about the nature of effective sex desegregation technical assistance will form the philosophical and operational foundation for the design and delivery of future services to school districts.

1. The Northwest Sex Desegregation Center should model the behaviors it desires school districts to adopt and practice. This is a requisite consideration in such important areas as staff assignments and responsibilities, working behaviors in training and consultive settings, coordination efforts throughout the region, training and materials content and relationships with school district, State Department of Education and other agency personnel. If cultural pluralism and sex equity are to be presented as essential and viable constructs for schools, it is imperative that the Center demonstrate these constructs throughout its relationships in the region.

2. Change is best facilitated in schools when local people are involved in identifying the need for change, designing the change strategy and working to produce change. The Rand study of change agent programs validates the experience of this staff, finding that educational change was more likely to be implemented in programs characterized by the local identification of problems and the local development of solutions. "The exercise of 're-inventing the wheel'," according to this study, "can provide an important opportunity for staff to work through and understand project precepts and to develop a sense of 'ownership' in project methods and goals."[1] Successful technical assistance, then, becomes a balance between the provision of existing materials, solutions and guidance in the development of localized solutions. This means that technical assistants must command process skills as well as content skills and must work cooperatively with districts over time to ensure meaningful change. In the area of Title IX technical assistance, the provision of materials which are too sufficient can have the effect of circumscribing the implementation efforts of schools, containing them within the framework of the Regulation. Change is more likely if the provision of technical information and materials related to the law are used as a catalyst to the development of a local process. Thus, if the district cannot or should not "re-invent the wheel" itself, it should be given a wheel with missing spokes necessitating at least some local input into the problem solving.

3. Implementation of sex equity in schools is best achieved through a conceptual approach which places it in an educational context rather than a legal/compliance context. A highly technical/legal approach to Title IX technical assistance which is aligned with the Regulation tends to produce a particularistic and circumscribed approach to sex equity in schools. This approach sets forth a finite set of highly specific expectations which are not unified conceptually, which has two possible detrimental effects. One of these is that district personnel are often left with a fragmented understanding of sex equity, left facing a large and varied collection of trees from which they cannot conceptualize the nature of the forest. The second effect of this level of analysis or approach is that it creates the impression that implementation of sex equity as the accomplishment of a certain number of specific tasks, so that when these have been completed, the district "has done it." A less specific approach which is aligned to the concepts of sex equity in education and which is implemented through collaborative, localized problem-solving techniques not only more closely adheres to the principles of successful technical assistance but avoids the problems identified above, because it is more open-ended and assists district personnel in understanding the larger picture and in implementing the principles of sex equity in a more comprehensive and internalized manner.

4. Technical assistance activities within districts are most likely to be effective when they have the support of the administration. The same Rand study concluded that project outcomes depended more on the characteristics of the project's setting than on any other factor. Among the crucial characteristics identified was the support of the administration: "the attitudes of administrators, in effect, tell the staff how seriously they should take project objectives."[2] Center staff will continue to work cooperatively with school district administrators in planning services and to view the development of their support for sex equity as a prerequisite for successful desegregation services.

5. Adaptivity - not of goals but of methods to achieve those goals - is crucial to the success of the change agent, particularly in an area as immense and diverse as Region X. Region X encompasses 835,142 square miles and contains several of the nation's largest cities as well as many remote Alaskan villages accessible only by air, and then only during the milder months of the year. In between these extremes lie 800 urban, suburban and rural districts, operating in four very different state contexts. In addition, each of these districts is unique in its economic, social and political characteristics, and all of these factors impact the efforts of technical assistants in sex desegregation. The need to adapt services is especially obvious in serving a population such as this, yet it is also generally supportive of educational change. Rand reports that projects imported into school districts from the outside generally failed to be implemented, because they failed to elicit the support of district staff. Highly prescriptive programs were either adapted to fit local needs or failed to be implemented at all.[3] Technical assistants must be well-versed in

content, well-skilled in process and experienced enough with Title IX compliance efforts in a variety of school settings to adapt solutions to meet local conditions. We have termed this approach "contextual problem solving."

6. Long-range change requires on-going attention from technical assistants, beginning with careful needs assessment and cycling through service planning, service delivery, service evaluation and continued contact to support district activity and to plan new services as needed. The importance to successful implementation of cooperative needs assessment and planning has already been discussed. Formative evaluation provides valuable feedback to Center staff, guiding them in planning follow-up service and in the delivery of similar services in other districts. As already mentioned, the attitudes and abilities of educators concerning Title IX and sex equity are evolving, and an active formative evaluation component enables teh Center to provide quality services in meeting the changing needs which result. Continued contact also allows the Center staff to be aware of and respond to changing needs within individual districts. The importance of a "bridge person" between the district and the source of technical assistance has been documented in the evaluation of the implementation efforts of the many curriculum sponsors involved in the Follow Through Planned Variations project.[4] Indeed, in sex desegregation, on-going support to local change agents can be crucial. Not only is there a continuing need for additional information and advice, there is a need for human support; and the human element is particularly important in dealing with an issue so immersed in personal and social values. It is not uncommon for a long phone call from a local Title IX Officer to end with a grateful, "I guess I just needed to talk to you; it's so lonely out here."

7. The measure of success in technical assistance is the ability of local educators to continue the change process when the technical assistance is withdrawn. Although the Center is committed to providing on-going support to local school districts in complying with Title IX and implementing sex equity, it will build into every service plan the objective of providing local educators with the knowledge and skills to implement these goals themselves. Change programs in which district staff have become dependent on technical assistance have been shown to fail.[5] The responsive, contextual approach to assistance in the process of change which guides this Center is aimed at achieving district autonomy. The ultimate goal is incorporation, i.e., infusing sex equity into all phases of the educational program, until it no longer is a "special program" but a part of the routinized behavior of the school.[6]

8. Though long-range planning is the ideal, it must be remembered that short-range planning may be a necessary first step in that direction. Though many districts have completed their minimal compliance obligations and moved toward developing programs to achieve sex equity in a variety of school programs, many more are still in need of assistance in meeting basic legal requirements. Further, the commitment of some of these districts may be relatively limited,

e.g., "just tell us what we have to do." In meeting these requests, it is a comfort to remember how many client districts currently involved in affirmative-level activities initially approached the Center staff with similar inquiries. The Center staff must be able to meet the needs as identified by districts so effectively that the personnel of these districts come to regard them as valuable resources to be turned to again in the future, and at the same time, endeavor to make them aware of the needs they may not yet have identified.

9. Coordination with other agencies and organizations involved in sex desegregation is important to the effectiveness of this Center as well as to the success of achieving sex equity in schools. Close working relationships with other Title IX technical assistants, both within Region X and across the nation, have had significant benefits for our work in the past. These relationships provide a means of sharing knowledge, materials and skills as well as providing a support group for people engaged in difficult and, at times, disheartening work. Cooperation with Title IX staff in State Departments of Education has been additionally helpful, through identifying district needs, providing entree into districts, clarifying state laws and requirements related to Title IX, assisting in service deliveries, providing a forum for training services and through dissemination of information about the Center's services capabilities. In addition, given the relatively limited resources to accomplish a leviathan task, coordination is essential to optimizing the impact of those funds available to implement sex equity.

10. Because sex and race discrimination in education are interactive, coordination with agencies involved in race desegregation is important to the effectiveness of this Center as well as to the over-arching goal of equal educational opportunity. In many ways, the process of sex role socialization in schools is parallel to the educational experience of minority children. The differentiated educational paths for females and males criss-cross those which have been created for majority and minority students. Teacher behavior, curriculum materials, school organization and employment configurations transmit differential expectations for young people on the basis of race as well as sex. No one encounters stereotypes based on her or his sex alone; these are always adjusted for race. The system of sexually differentiated reinforcement is altered when applied to an Asian, Native American, Chicano or Black girl or boy. The interactive nature of sex and race stereotypes in schools is illustrated in research on the impact of desegregation on students. Studies have shown that, in newly desegregated schools, Black females and White males are more severely impacted by the disruption in their environment. White females and Black males fare somewhat better. This has been attributed to the fact that the predominate standard of attractiveness in females is, in fact, a caucasian image and to the fact that Blackness is associated with male athletic prowess.[7] In these settings, such as Seattle, which will implement an ambitious desegregation plan this fall aimed at eliminating racial isolation in its schools, it is particularly important that technical assistants in both sex and race desegregation work cooperatively toward a school environment which fosters the full development of individual persons, regardless of race or sex.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

Section I: Introduction

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1971 The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

[2]Nelson, Richard K.
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Section II: Research Perspectives and Methods

[1]Since 1970, the author of this section (C. David Beers) has been engaged in various contract research efforts in education that draw on perspectives and methods from anthropology and oral history, thus, much of the conceptualization and language employed in this paper has been foreshadowed in his earlier writings.

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[2]A. Jon Magoo has an important review article relating to this topic called "Constructivist Appraches in Educational Research", Review of Educational Research, Fall, 1977, Vol. 47, pp. 651-693.

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Section III: Lessons Learned About Title IX Technical Assistance

[1]Paul Berman and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin
"Implementation of Educational Innovation," The Educational Forum (March, 1976), drawn from a five volume study published by the Rand Corporation under the general title Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change (R-1589/HEW).

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]C. David Beers, et al.
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[5]Paul Berman and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin
"Implementation of Educational Innovation," The Educational Forum (March, 1976), drawn from five volume study published by Rand Corporation under the general title Federal Program Supporting Educational Change (R-1589/HEW).

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[7]Nancy H. St. John
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